

Rockwoods Reservation Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary



Missouri Department of Conservation

September 25, 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is seeking public input as we develop and revise conservation area management plans.
- Rockwoods Reservation is a 1,880-acre conservation area in west St. Louis County. Visitors can discover Missouri's forests and wildlife on seven hiking trails.
- MDC conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (June 24-August 8, 2013) to gather input as staff begin to develop a 10-year management plan for Rockwoods Reservation.
- During this time period (June 24-August 8, 2013), we heard 134 comments from 126 respondents. Two additional respondents requested that we use their comments from the past year.
- 24 attendees participated in the Rockwoods Reservation Open House on August 5, 2013.
- Common themes heard during this idea gathering stage included requests to allow rock climbing, requests to allow equestrian use, suggestions for additional trail routes, agreement with proposed forest management, and mixed comments on the recent regulation change to allow pets.
- The Rockwoods Reservation area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year area management plan. The draft plan will be available online (likely November 2013) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

INTRODUCTION

Public Comment on Conservation Area Management Plans

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. MDC is in the multi-year process of updating management plans for conservation areas and invites public comments. To preview draft management plans and share comments online, visit mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

MDC conservation areas cover almost one million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Most Missourians are within a 30-minute drive of an MDC conservation area.

Missourians care about conservation and use conservation areas for many different reasons. These areas help people discover nature through various activities, and help make Missouri a great place to hunt, fish, and enjoy other outdoor activities. We want to know how conservation areas are important to Missourians. Encouraging public comments on Conservation Area Management Plans is part of MDC's ongoing efforts of working for and with Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish and wildlife.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the Wildlife Code of Missouri. MDC will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.

Questions? Please contact MDC Public Involvement Coordinator Amy Buechler at 573-522-4115 x3252, or amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov.

Rockwoods Reservation

Rockwoods Reservation is in western St. Louis County. It was established in 1938 by a group of St. Louis businessmen headed by A.P. Greensfelder as the first Conservation Area purchased by the Conservation Commission. Other gifts and purchases have increased the area to its present size of 1,880 acres. Rockwoods Reservation is part of a larger contiguous public greenspace of 5,056 acres which includes Greensfelder County Park and Rockwoods Range Conservation Area immediately to the southwest. Given its size, natural integrity, and proximity to Missouri's largest metropolitan area, Rockwoods offers tremendous opportunity to connect people to nature. Anecdotally, the most popular area uses include hiking, bicycling on Glencoe Road, attending MDC programs, and picnicking.

Rockwoods Reservation harbors a rich diversity of plant and animal life as well as springs, caves, and rock formations. Cool, moist, north facing ravines and lush creek bottoms contrast with the nearby arid, rocky ridge tops, and south slopes. The terrain is reminiscent of the Ozark hills and, indeed, many plants and animals found in hill country are also found here. Although located near metropolitan St. Louis, raccoons, opossums, turkeys, deer, fox, songbirds, chipmunks, and snakes are common here.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (June 24-August 8, 2013) to gather input as staff begin to develop a 10-year management plan for Rockwoods Reservation. The plan, once drafted, will be posted online (mdc.mo.gov/areaplans) for further public comment.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the Wildlife Code of Missouri. MDC will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people.

Public Involvement

The idea gathering phase for development of Rockwoods Reservation area management plan ran from June 24 through August 8, 2013. The objective of this phase was to inform stakeholders about area planning process and ask them to share their ideas.

- June 24 – August 8, 2013 – Developed trifold brochure about Rockwoods Reservation idea gathering phase and distributed at various events.
- June 24 – August 8, 2013 – Information and online comment form available at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.
- July 17, 2013 – News release sent to local media outlets.
- August 1, 2013 – Table at Great River Greenways Open House to collect comments.
- August 5, 2013 – Rockwoods Reservation Open House.
- August 8, 2013 – Idea gathering phase closed.

Next steps

The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Rockwoods Reservation. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely November 2013) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

Who responded?

Table 1. Total number of respondents commenting during the idea gathering phase (June 24 – August 8, 2013) by respondent category.

Organization Type	Count
Individual citizens	108
Rock climbing organizations (Access Fund; Illinois Climbers Association; Iowa Climbers Coalition; Mid-Mo Climbers; Missouri Climbers Coalition; St. Louis Single Christian Adventure Group; St. Louis MO Climbers; Troy Buchanan high school climbing club; St. Louis Adventure Group)	10
Business Owners (Vertical Voyages; Climb Soill; Upper Limits Rock Gym)	3
Equestrian organizations (Happy Trails Riding Club; Ozark Ridge Riders; Wildwood Horse Owners Acreage Association)	3
State Agency (Missouri Department of Social Services/Division of Youth Services)	1
University (St. Louis Community College - Wildwood campus)	1
TOTAL	126

How they responded

Table 2. Total number of each response received. Several respondents submitted multiple comments, so the total number of response types is greater than the total number groups/people responding.

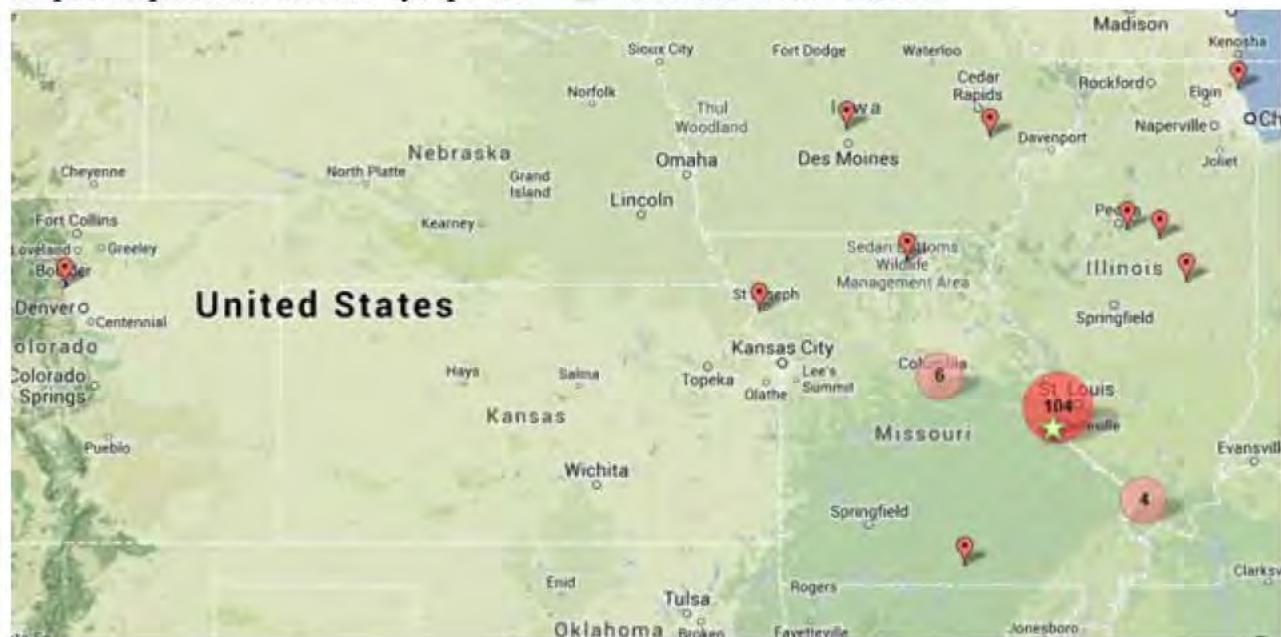
Response Type	Count
Web Comment Form	117
Letters	2
Open House comments (includes 2 additional letters)	15
TOTAL	134

Where respondents are from

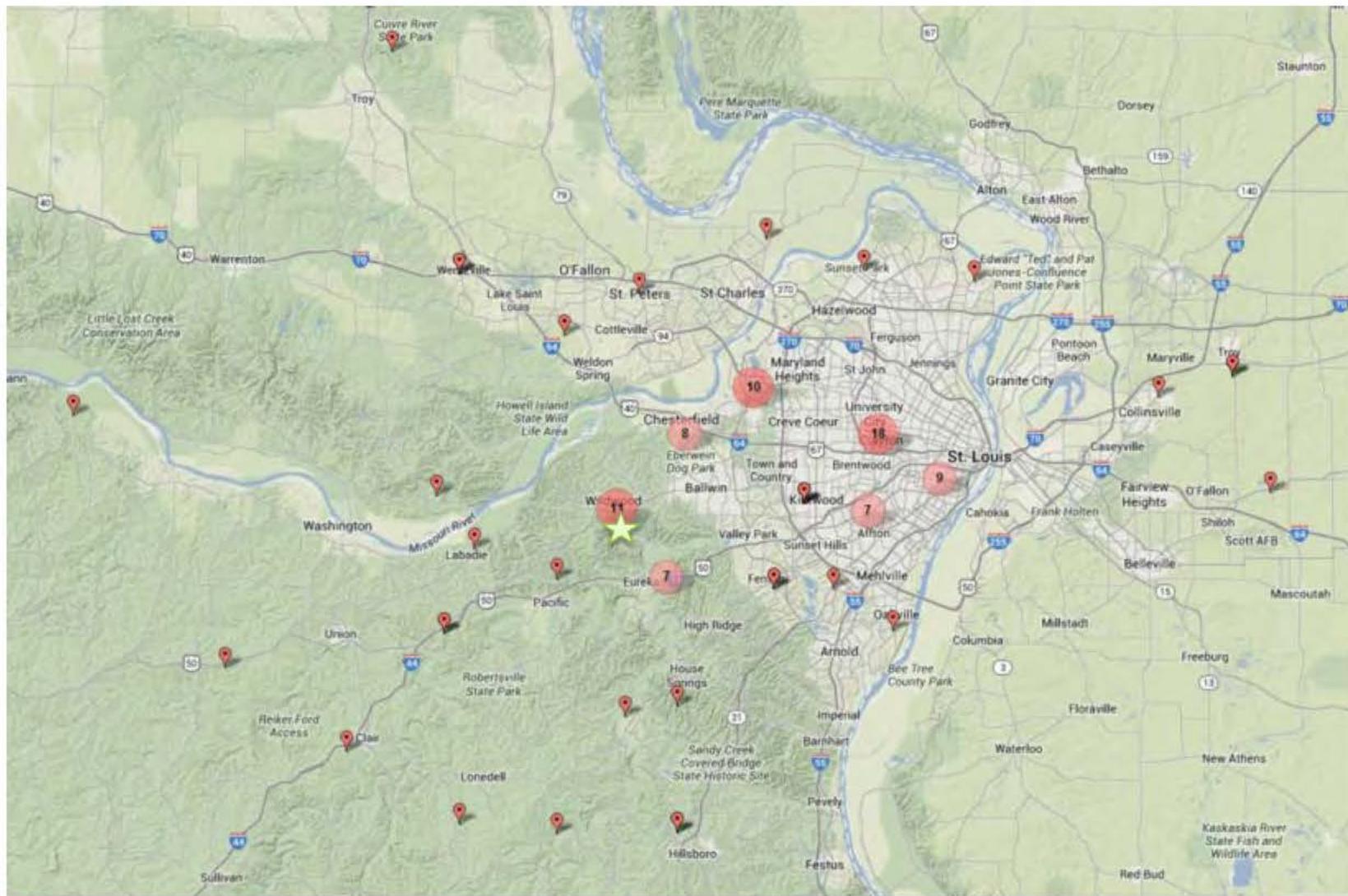
Table 3. Total number of responses categorized by each respondent's location.

State	Count	Percent
Missouri	111	88%
Illinois	12	10%
Iowa	2	1.4%
Colorado	1	0.6%
TOTAL	126	100%

Map of respondent locations by zipcode. ★ = Rockwoods Reservation



Map of respondent locations by zipcode in St. Louis area.  = Rockwoods Reservation



OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

August 1, 2013 Great Rivers Greenways Open House

Wildwood City Hall

4:00-7:00 p.m.

- Rockwoods Reservation had a table at the Great Rivers Greenway (GRG) Open House and handed out same comment card used in August 5 open house.
- 2 comment sheets submitted
 - 1 organization represented
 - Wildwood Horse Owners Acreage Association (WHOAA)
 - How many times per year do you visit Rockwoods Reservation?
 - 4; 24
 - Zipcodes from GRG open house commenters
 - Both from 63038 (Wildwood)

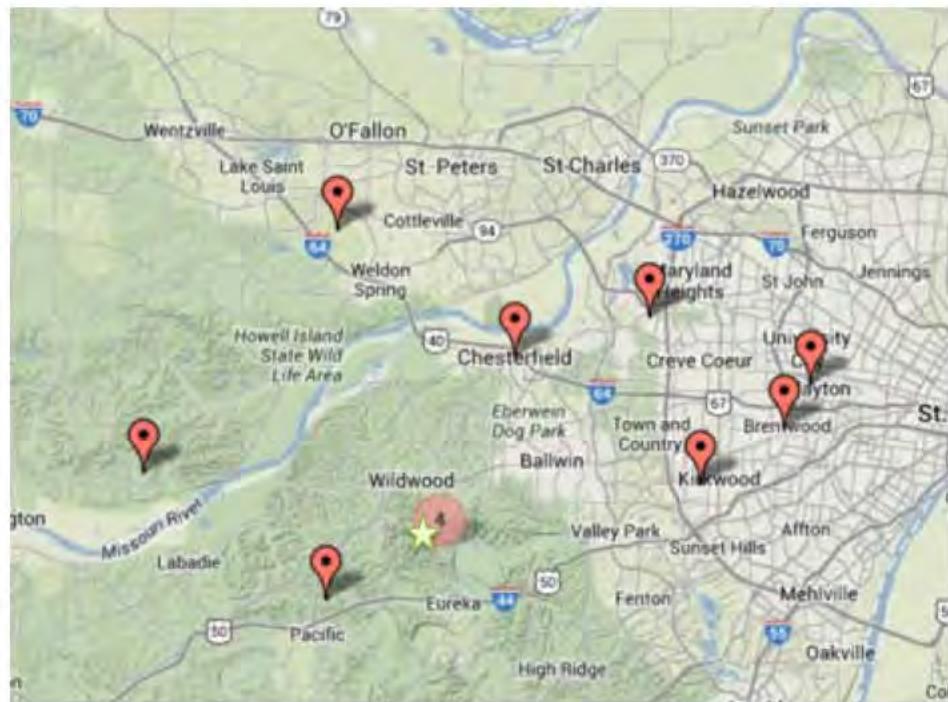
August 5, 2013 Rockwoods Reservation Open House

Rockwoods Reservation Visitor Center

6:00-8:00 p.m.

- 24 attendees
- 13 comment sheets submitted (several mentioned that they had already submitted online comments)
 - 9 organizations represented
 - Upper Limits Rock Gym
 - Missouri Climbers Coalition
 - Mid Mo Climbers
 - Climb Soill
 - St. Louis Adventure Group (SLAG)
 - Access Fund
 - Wildwood Horse Owners Acreage Association (WHOAA)
 - Vertical Voyages
 - MDC retired (Forestry)
 - How many times per year do you visit Rockwoods Reservation?
 - Answers ranged from first time visiting to “at least 100 times, if not more.”
 - Average from open house commenters = 15 visits per year.

- Map of zipcodes from open house commenters (★ = Rockwoods Reservation):



- How did you hear about this open house?
 - Facebook - 4
 - Email
 - Internet
 - Access Fund Email - 3
 - Mountain gear - St. Louis Adventure Group
 - Post Dispatch
 - Wildwood Patch
 - Wildwood City Hall Brochure

THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH ROCKWOODS RESERVATION SUMMER 2013 IDEA GATHERING PHASE

Rock Climbing

1. Currently have to go out-of-state to rock climb; a local area for outdoor rock climbing is needed.
2. Rock climbers are good conservationists and stewards of the land.
3. Work with climbing organizations to build a safe program (The Access Fund and “local climbing organizations” mentioned most often).
4. Suggest other sites to model rock climbing program after (Capen Park – Columbia; Shawnee National Park – Southern Illinois; Illinois state parks; Johnson’s Shut-ins State Park; Elephant Rocks State Park) .
5. Rock climbing would reach a demographic MDC has trouble reaching.
6. Rock climbing gets kids/people outside.
7. Allow open climbing (no Special Use Permit needed).
8. Willing to place/inspect/replace fixed anchors (or suggests group who could).
9. Willing to volunteer for rock climbing area.
10. Rock climbing is a healthy activity.
11. Could allow climbing without bolts as a pilot program.
12. Require groups to have their own liability insurance.
13. Suggest agreement between Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri Department of Social Services/Youth Services Division to allow rock climbing.
14. Require liability waivers to rock climb.

Infrastructure/amenities

1. Suggest additional trail routes.
2. Visitor’s Center should be open on weekends.
3. Like the trails.
4. Need to clean/fix up restrooms.
5. Would like more interpretive exhibits/historical markers.
6. Would like accessible trails.
7. Would like a playground.
8. Need to maintain trails and sign markers.
9. Rockwoods Reservation is a well maintained area.
10. Like interpretive trail brochures.

Forest management activities

1. The large majority of comments on this topic agree with proposed forest management for diversity.
2. Only one comment indicated concern about proposed forest management activities.
3. Suggest more focus on educating public about forest management practices.

Pets at Rockwoods Reservation

1. Received comments indicating that people are happy that pets are allowed and others that indicate people oppose having pets at Rockwoods Reservation.

Equestrian use

1. Allow equestrian use.
2. Don't allow horses on trails.
3. Willing to volunteer for equestrian trails.
4. Riding horses gets more people outside.
5. Need more close opportunities to ride horses.
6. Parking for equestrian use could be at Greensfelder Park.
7. Would like improved equine camping.
8. Would be willing to pay a yearly fee for equestrian use.

Other comments

1. Like special events at Rockwoods Reservation.
2. Suggest additional programs (historical programs, star gazing, etc.)
3. Allow mountain biking on some trails.
4. Allow elderly to drive UTVs on public paths/trails.
5. Would like more historical information.
6. Need safe way to explore Cobb Cavern.
7. Don't allow mountain bikes on trails.
8. Open north end gate during day.
9. Support small user fee.
10. Continue managed deer hunts.
11. Continue support for memorial forests.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Rockwoods Reservation Public Input Flier:

Share Your Ideas

Online

mdc.mo.gov/areaplans

Comment Card:

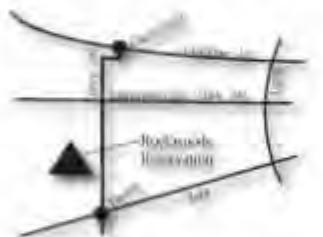
Visitor Center Hours

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Closed 12 - 1 p.m. daily and State Holidays

Open House:

August 5, 2013 6 - 8 p.m. at the Rockwoods Reservation Visitor Center



Stay Connected

Be sure to tell us who you are. We would like to keep you posted on the progress towards the final Rockwoods Reservation Area Management Plan.



We need your input!

Contribute ideas and comments towards a 10 year Area Management Plan for Rockwoods Reservation. Not every idea will make it, but we'll do our best to connect your ideas to the Missouri Department of Conservation mission and the scientific knowledge of our professional Foresters, Biologists and Naturalists.

Timeline

June 1 - August 8, 2013 - Open idea collections.

August 5, 2013, 6 - 8 p.m. Open House Rockwoods Reservation Visitor Center.

August/September 2013 - Draft Area Management Plan composed.

October 2013 - Draft Area Management Plan posted for public comment. Go to mdc.mo.gov/areaplans to place your comments.

November 2013 & Beyond - Public Comments reviewed, responses to Public Comment drafted and Final Area Management Plan composed and posted at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

Help Improve Rockwoods Reservation



**Public Input for the
10 Year Area
Management Plan
~ Summer 2013 ~**

*Rockwoods Reservation
Established 1938, Missouri's first
purchased Conservation Area.*

Rockwoods Reservation

Established 1938, Missouri's first purchased Conservation Area.

Forest Management:



We are considering using forest management practices (which could include limited prescribed fire and selective tree thinning) to promote natural community restoration. Without such efforts, Rockwoods forests are becoming overcrowded, less diverse, and more vulnerable to forest health threats.



... and other ideas that are important to you.

What is Rockwoods and who is MDC?

Rockwoods Reservation is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Conservation areas, like Rockwoods, support the Department's mission by offering places to restore and conserve fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources.

Share Your Ideas, Summer 2013

Here are some topic areas to consider as we begin to draft our next 10 year Area Management Plan

Facilities:



Do you have ideas about trails, Visitor Center, restrooms, picnic areas or other facilities?



Public Use:



Do you have ideas for current or potential recreational activities that fit the MDC mission?



Serving nature and you

Appendix 2. Open House Comment Form

SHARE YOUR Comments

How is Rockwoods Reservation important to you?

Personal Information

Name: _____

Organization (if any): _____

E-mail: _____

Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about the Rockwoods Reservation Area Plan.

Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about other conservation area plans.

Zipcode: _____

How many times per year do you visit Rockwoods Reservation?

How did you hear about this open house?

Questions

Tell us what suggestions you have about the trails, picnic areas, pavilion, Education Building, restrooms, and other area amenities meet your needs or interests.



(Continued on back)

Keeping in mind Missouri Department of Conservation's mission of conserving fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing an opportunity for citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources, are there changes or improvements you would like to see in the recreational opportunities (e.g. hiking, biking, etc.) allowed or not allowed on Rockwoods Reservation?

We are considering using forest management practices (which could include limited prescribed fire and selective tree thinning) to promote natural community restoration at Rockwoods Reservation. Without such efforts, the woods at Rockwoods Reservation are becoming overcrowded, less diverse, and more vulnerable to forest health threats. Tell us how supportive you are of these and other forest management practices at Rockwoods. What are your concerns?

Other comments/suggestions (If needed, please attach additional sheets.)

Thank you for your comments! Leave in comment box or mail to: Amy Buechler, MDC, Policy Coordination, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65109 (postmark by August 8). You can also comment online at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. Comment period closes August 8.

Appendix 3. Comments received at Great River Greenways Open House (August 1, 2013)

Question 1: Tell us what suggestions you have about the trails, picnic areas, pavilion, Education Building, restrooms, and other area amenities.

Eliminate dogs - Post sign stating dogs on leash & must pick up waste - enforce speed limit - restrooms running water - wider trails that are kept trimmed

My family moved to this area in the early 1950's. We hope our parks stay "multi-use" to include equestrian quality trails in all of our parks, etc. This would need to be a more "natural" footing, not asphalt. We love our nature trails & enjoy them on horseback

Question 2: Keeping in mind Missouri Department of Conservation's mission of conserving fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing an opportunity for citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources, are there changes or improvements you would like to see in the recreational opportunities (e.g. hiking, biking, etc.) allowed or not allowed on Rockwoods Reservation?

More equestrian trails (not all asphalt)

Question 3: We are considering using forest management practices (which could include limited prescribed fire and selective tree thinning) to promote natural community restoration at Rockwoods Reservation. Without such efforts, the woods at Rockwoods Reservation are becoming overcrowded, less diverse, and more vulnerable to forest health threats. Tell us how supportive you are of these and other forest management practices at Rockwoods. What are your concerns?

Very supportive.

Question 4: Other comments/suggestions

(No comments received)

Appendix 4. Comments received at Rockwoods Reservation Open House (August 5, 2013)

Question 1: Tell us what suggestions you have about the trails, picnic areas, pavilion, Education Building, restrooms, and other area amenities.

Open cliffs to rock climbing again.
I would like to have the bluff open to climbing. Trails are awesome. Need more publication of trail maintenance days.
Let's have outdoor (rock climbing) climbing in Rockwoods! There are lots of climbers in the St. Louis area but nowhere (outdoors) to climb. The nearest place is Jackson Falls is 180 miles away. The next nearest place is NW Arkansas (300 miles).
Open up the bluff line to climbers again! We're respectful, non-invasive, and low maintenance! :)
Improve rest rooms for weekend use and add some covered patio areas with picnic benches.
Explore the possibility of allowing rock climbing at R&R. Work with the Access Fund to develop a management plan to include climbing activity.
I heard that there were plans to explore bringing rock climbing back to Rockwoods. I think this would be a great idea, as it exposes younger people in their teens and twenties to the local outdoor areas. I would be willing to help make this possible.
There is a relly large interest in having the area open for climbing again. It would be a huge benefit to the area as the next closest climbing is in the Shawnee Ntl Forest.

Question 2: Keeping in mind Missouri Department of Conservation's mission of conserving fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing an opportunity for citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources, are there changes or improvements you would like to see in the recreational opportunities (e.g. hiking, biking, etc.) allowed or not allowed on Rockwoods Reservation?

Rock Climbing has brought me to some of the most beautiful places. If it weren't for climbing I would have never experienced them. Would love other people to get excited about climbing & bringing them to outdoor experience!
Climbing
I would like to see rock climbing allowed at Rockwoods Reservation. There is precedent in the state of Missouri for allowing climbing, including on State Parks and Forest Service lands.
Climbers are a growing user group that cares about Conservation and responsibly enjoying the outdoors.
Please allow rock climbing in this park!
See the previous statement :)
Mountain Biking; Outdoor Rock Climbing
Some sessions on the history of the area/ park and host a star party for amateur astronomers.
My idea is the reopening of the climbing bluffs to rock climbing repelling and bouldering. A significant climbing community in the area would play a key role in area development. This would include placing / replacing fixed anchors, removing of object hazards (such as rock fall) and the promotion of leave no trace ethics.
As a climbing gym owner, I have witnessed the climbing community growth over the years. Rock Climbers are a legitimate user group and should be recognized as such. Climbers can help

bring a better economic benefit to the area.

Climbing is currently endangered in Missouri. Every weekend dozens of people drive to Illinois and Arkansas to climb there. I think climbing is a good candidate for consideration because it introduces a young demographic to "leave no trace".

Climbing; Horse access would be great too.

Question 3: We are considering using forest management practices (which could include limited prescribed fire and selective tree thinning) to promote natural community restoration at Rockwoods Reservation. Without such efforts, the woods at Rockwoods Reservation are becoming overcrowded, less diverse, and more vulnerable to forest health threats. Tell us how supportive you are of these and other forest management practices at Rockwoods. What are your concerns?

Very supportive of forest management.

I am very supportive. Controlled fire is better than uncontrolled.

Supportive.

My concern is that we as climbers leave the site in as good of shape or better than we found it...every time we visit!

Very supportive of fostering the natural community restoration.

Very supportive.

Historically climbers are great stewards and a wonderful resource for volunteers (ie free labor), trail days, area clean up and general maintenance. I support management practices that encourage rock climbing with respect to the reservation.

I believe that Rockwoods should be a wilderness area first, and a park second. I am in favor of controlled burns etc to limit invasive species and maintain ecosystem diversity.

I'm supportive. I've seen that be very effective.

Question 4: Other comments/suggestions

Rock Climbing is a great recreational use!!!

Open Climbing.

Please allow rock climbing.

Groups such as Access Fund, Mid Mo Climbers, Semo Climbing Club, MU Climbing Club and Local Rock Gyms, such as Upper Limits are an excellent community to manage and preserve the bluffs.

I would like to be contacted, so that if there is anything I can do to help the policy changes, I can put the time in.

In addition we received two typed comment letters at the Rockwoods Reservation Open House:

**Regarding Input for the 10 Year Management Plan – Rockwoods Reservation
Summer 2013**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Runitall (Randy) Herberg, 2606 Walnut Avenue, Wildwood, Missouri, 63038.
Phone: 636/458-1082. E-mail: rherberg@comcast.net

My interest in Rockwoods Reservation dates back to 1960, when as Assistant District Forester at Sullivan with MDC, I was assigned to go to Rockwoods Reservation to help install the flagpole in front of the Conservation Education Center.

Fast forward to 1967, when I was assigned to Rockwoods Reservation as Area Manager, where my family and I lived until 1979. Annual attendance was averaging between 180,000 and 200,00 visitors a year. We were the last family to live there. Having stayed in the vicinity of Rockwoods as residents, we have maintained an interest in the Reservation. We have watched as emphasis has changed, employees have come and gone, and the area surrounding Rockwoods has become more heavily populated.

In a conversation with a former Director of Missouri Department of Conservation, I asked him if it was feasible to convert emphasis from conservation education to a forestry-oriented direction similar to Twin Pines. I felt that Powder Valley, Forest 44, Busch Area, and Babler Park were all doing programs that had been the exclusive goal of Rockwoods previously and Rockwoods was redundant. He said it couldn't be afforded at the time. So, here we are!

Comments below are in no particular order, but dreams of an old retiree:

- Avoid the "park" image, and continue as an MDC responsibility area.
- Provide only enough picnic facilities to accommodate "forestry" related activities.
- Make more use of the existing trails as interpretive tools.
- Demonstration activities might include TSI, thinning, wild fire control, prescribed burning, tree pruning, harvesting, BMPs, tree and related plant identification, chainsaw safety, etc.
- Dedicate exhibits to Rockwoods history and forest management.
- Direct the forestry emphasis toward the forest landowners and/or forest land managers of the St. Louis metro area. Include opportunities for school and youth groups.
- Conduct seminars/training classes, etc. for different levels of understanding by the publics.
- Invite representatives of the forest industry in Missouri to present programs and participate in activities.
- Highlight forest products where possible.
- Exhibit forestry and logging tools of the past and present.
- Continue the maple syrup program and its importance.
- Include wildlife aspects of the forest.
- Include watershed benefits of the forest.
- Manage bicycle and hiking activities regarding parking, traffic flow, and impact on other users.
- Continue managed deer hunts.
- Include urban forestry as a significant part of the programs.
- Share information on services available from other related agencies.
- Rockwoods Association was a great support group starting in 1942. A volunteer group of people for help with invasive plants, trail maintenance, etc. can be a valuable asset.
- Continued support of the Memorial Forests, signs, posts, and maps should be carried on to honor those who supported forestry, the nursery, and fire control many years ago.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my ideas and am glad to see MDC looking at Rockwoods Reservation and its future.





VERTICAL VOYAGES™

ADVENTURES BEGIN HERE

My name is Jon Richard and I am the owner of Vertical Voyages. We are a climbing guide service that offers both Rock Climbing and Technical Tree Climbing experiences. We believe that adventure programing can be life changing, for this reason we strive to help our customers see the importance of taking healthy risk. At Vertical Voyages we also work to collaborate with the organizations we serve to develop innovative programs that connect adventure to their goals and mission as an organization.

Currently, Vertical Voyages works closely with the Missouri Botanical Gardens education division and is endorsed by the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri. Our Recreational Tree Climbing Program is also offered through Lindenwood University. We recently offered climbing at the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Runge Nature Center in Jefferson City for their 20th Anniversary Celebration event on July 13th.

A few years ago, I approached Rockwood Reservation about using the climbing site was used by the now defunct organization STREAM. I was disappointed when I was informed the park was phasing out climbing and tabled the idea. When I discovered your announcement about developing a new management plan for the park I was encouraged. I have enjoyed Rockwood for years for both hiking and biking. It's a true gem of a park for outdoor enthusiasts. I feel that the park should reconsider allowing climbing at some level. There are many other parks in the United States that allow technical rock climbing. I would suggest that the MDC look at the policies that these parks already have in place and use them as a model for their management plan. Here are a few examples of parks where I have personally climbed that allow technical climbing, they include: Johnson Shut-ins and Capen Park (Missouri); Hanging Rock and Crowders Mountain State Parks (North Carolina); Enchanted Rock State Park (Texas), Eldorado Canyon State Park (Colorado); Ferne Clyffe State Park and Giant City State Park (Illinois); Devil's Lake State Park (Wisconsin); Taylor's Falls State Park (Minnesota) and the Adirondack State Park (New York). At the very least climbers must be made aware of the park's regulations and required to sign a liability waiver. Should it come down to solely a liability issue, the park could require that only organizations that have their own insurance would be permitted to use the climbing site. Therefor, payments would be available in the event of an accident; which by the way are very rare occurrences with organized guided programs. An excellent reference is *Accidents in North American Mountaineering* published by the American Alpine Club. I don't believe there were any accidents associated with an organized climbing programs in many years and certainly not in 2012.

As a guide service, I would like to offer introductory climbing programs to groups and individuals. We would provide all of the safety equipment and instruction. We could also assist in maintaining the climb site and evaluating fixed anchors should fixed anchors be used. I understand that fixed anchors were used by STREAM. I would strongly suggest continuing the use fixed anchors as they will save the cliff-line

vegetation and ultimately reduce the impact on the trees and soil. We could also offer general education programs to the non-climbing public through slideshows and presentations. As mentioned earlier Vertical Voyages is always open to developing collaborative programs. Some initial suggestions would be geology and natural history lessons. Rockwood Reservation also has trees and may also want to consider recreational tree climbing in addition to rock climbing. This would tie-in nicely with your Forest Ecology curriculum.

Just a bit about my background. I am a certified *American Mountain Guides Association* (AMGA) Single Pitch Instructor and professional member of the AMGA and currently pursuing my Advance Rock Guide certification in October. I also serve on the GOTC Council (Global Organization of Tree Climbers) and have over 12 years of experience in the climbing industry. Before launching Vertical Voyages in 2009 I taught science at Chesterfield day school for 9 years and also implemented a climbing program for the Fulton School. My company is licensed and insured and served over 2000 climbers without incident since we opened our doors in 2009. I am also a certified trainer of the Warriors Way mental fitness program developed by the world renowned climber and author Arno Ilgner (<http://www.warriorsway.com/>). I would gladly serve as a consultant if you need a local industry professional to help advise the MDC with the development of a climbing management plan.

Rock climbers are certainly an emerging user group in Saint Louis, they are population that has grown to support three local climbing facilities; Upper Limits Downtown, Upper Limits West County and the new SqILL climbing facility in Lafayette Square. Currently, I run almost all of my rock climbing programs in Southern Illinois even though I am a Missouri based company. I would love to see more climbing options in my home state and support the local economy here in Missouri.

Feel free to contact me through my email: jon@verticalvoyages.com or by phone at 314-477-6008.

Regards,



Jon Richard
Owner
Vertical Voyages Climbing Guides



VERTICAL VOYAGES™
ADVENTURES BEGIN HERE

Appendix 5. Comments received via online comment form or letter during Rockwoods Reservation Summer 2013 Idea Gathering Phase.

Similar interactive activities like Powder Valley Nature Center, Grow Native or more butterfly plant areas to look at. Handicapped accessible paths with native plant/tree labeling, more historical markers w/ info similar to Meramec Springs driving trail, bird viewing area and wildlife pond similar to other Nature Centers. I am sure many civic groups or specialty groups, i.e. scouts, garden groups, the newer Children and Nature groups and various other clubs would be willing to volunteer hours and even donate native plants/trees. A playground would be nice, and my son thought a building closer to the entrance of the reservation too (because he thought it took forever to get there :)) Our first experience visiting the center was today. I was watching the old movie of how they use to do tours with the wildlife, etc. That was really neat to see. A bigger screen with more history of the area would be nice too, but they had some really nice specimens that we'd not seen before, and even though it was not a huge display, was very nice and informative.

Keep the trails - this is the best part of the Green Rock and I love both Rock Quarry and Lime Kiln. Glad that pets are now able to hike.

I would like to suggest two connector trails that I think would make Rockwoods more appealing to trail users and expand their options for both shorter and longer hikes.

The first would link the Trail Among The Trees with the Lime Kiln Trail. A good location for it would be around the head of the hollow that runs north and south between the trails, starting from where the bench now stands on the Lime Kiln Trail.

The second would create a short loop (about 2.5 to 3 miles long) at the north end of the Green Rock Trail by connecting a point near the 2-mile marker to a point near the Glencoe Road trailhead. Since most Rockwoods visitors have neither the time nor inclination to hike the entire Green Rock trail, a loop trail like this would allow many more of them to experience this most wilderness-like section of Rockwoods.

I would like to see rock climbing allowed at Rockwoods. Rockwoods plays a very important part in the development of rock climbing in St. Louis. Tom Hornbein, who went on to be the first person to climb the West Ridge of Everest, started climbing at Rockwoods, as did many other climbers of his generation. The rock here is historically and culturally significant, and as such should be open to future generations of Missouri climbers.

MDC staff have told me that the MDC is concerned about the quality of the fixed anchors. There are a number of rock climbers in the St. Louis region, including myself, who have extensive experience placing, inspecting, and/or replacing fixed anchors. We are more than happy to help.

There is precedent in Missouri for meeting the needs of both rock climbers and land managers, including the state parks and the forest service. Different parks have taken different approaches to satisfy their concerns over safety. Johnson Shut-Ins and Elephant Rocks are two well-known examples. Johnson Shut-Ins has a simple check-in and waiver process (the waivers/permits are provided at a self-serve kiosk). Elephant Rocks does not require a permit/waiver. I believe that one of these can serve as a model for Rockwoods.

I know that there is a common ground where the MDC and climbers can come together, addressing the concerns of the MDC and providing climbing access to Rockwoods.

Thank you

Rockwoods Reservation has been open to climbing in the past. As a climbing club and sponsor for a local high school youth. It would be great to see this area opened again. The children that I work with have a very little opportunity to climb outside in less we take a long driving trip. Anchors can be easily fixed if there is need to fix them. The kids can't understand the true beauty of climbing when they are in the gym setting. They're competing against themselves when they're climbing and it makes all the difference in their attitude and their desire to do it. I have seen kids push themselves further than I thought they could. I encourage you to consider allowing climbing in Rockwoods Reservation.

I would really love to see rock climbing available again. It is really becoming a mainstream sport and the training and safety equipment has come a long long way in recent years. I do not see sufficient reason to have our park unavailable to climbers in our area.

I would love to see the climbing area reopened. There was some climbing going on there in the past. If the worry is safety, I believe this would be an opportunity to work access fund, and I believe it would be pretty easy to find climbers with bolting experience to help with re-bolting, and make for a safe experience.

We would use the park regularly for climbing. We consider it to be important to be proactive in helping park management with volunteer days at the parks we frequent.

I strongly suggest that the park reopens to climbing. Most of us, alas have to drive to other states for climbing and there are many of us. Replacing the fixed anchors is a minimal expense while having climbers around almost all year round will provide the benefits of added visitors who will continue to come back frequently.

My friends and I are avid rock climbers and right now the closest place to climb is Jackson Falls in So IL. And if we really want to have a lot of good climbing we have to go to Horseshoe Canyon in AR (5 hours away). We would love to be able to climb Rockwoods again. I am sure people would volunteer to re-bolt the routes so the anchors would be rock solid. To have good outdoor climbing in our own backyard would be a god send.

Please keep up the hiking trails, signs maps so new and regular users have good access.

Yes, please do habitat restoration for diversity with both native plants and animals.

Thanks!

Handwritten letter submitted:

July 15, 2013

Dear Sir,

I am writing this letter to oppose the trial use of Rockwood Reservation for people who like to walk their dogs there. In the past, Rockwood was the only hiking trails in St. Louis County that did not allow pets. Pet owners have many choices in the area to walk their dogs.

For people like me who do not wish to step on dog dirt nor do I appreciate the odor that comes with it and do not like the idea that there is a potential by a careless pet owner to be mauled or killed by a pit bull--in the past Rockwood Reservation was the only place for me to walk in the county with peace of mind.

I know there is a leash law but I have observed some pet owners and know when they are back on the trails they take their dogs off the leash. When they do this, there is a potential for a lawsuit if a dog attacks someone at Rockwood Reservation so I am surprised you would allow pets for this reason.

Many years ago, you closed the cave because of the potential danger of rocks falling and injuring someone plus a potential lawsuit which I thought was a wise decision. Is this truly a wise decision now to allow pets & perhaps face a lawsuit?

Because of your new policy of allowing pets, I have stopped walking the trails at Rockwood which I had previously walked for twenty years. In the past, I have always supported taxes to improve our county parks. If pets are allowed in the only place I can walk in peace, then I'll have to reconsider whether I will support a tax increase for the county parks.

Please consider people like me when deciding your policy on pets.

Please forward this letter to those who will decide policy in the future.

As a property owner that backs up to the park, I use the trails at least 2-3 times a week. I LOVE Rockwoods Reservation, and am especially glad that the park now allows pets. I attend the park programs often with my family. The park is a big asset to the community, encouraging people to get out and enjoy nature. It's well maintained and overall a lovely place.

I would like rockclimbing to be permitted within the reservation. I understand climbing was permitted in the park; but, due to concerns regarding the quality of fixed anchors, it currently is prohibited. Quality anchors is also a concern for the climbing community; we like to climb safe. Perhaps the MDC and the climbing community could develop anchor guidelines that satisfy both. There has been a lot of development and improvement in fixed anchors in recent years. There are organizations, such as the American Safe Climbing Associations, that promote and educate. Thanks for you consideration

I propose elderly people with a golden pass be allowed to drive side by sides or golf carts on public paths & trails. Many older people, due to mobility limitations, cannot walk far, ride a bike or horse and may not qualify for wheelchair, which are difficult to ride on trails. All people, not just the physically fit, should have access to and be able to enjoy public lands. Thank you!

I love Rockwoods Reservation!

Hi MDC,

I am a lifelong climber and now an attorney and recent graduate of Saint Louis University School of Law. Climbers are one of the most responsible and conservation minded group of recreationalists you will find. I encourage you to work with local climbing groups and the Access Fund to come up with a responsible way to manage climbing at Rockwoods Reservation.

Not only is climbing compatible with good recreation area management, but I think you will find that the presence of climbers, with their conservation ethic and passion for the land will make it a better recreation area for all.

Fixed anchors can be limited to just the top of routes for "top-roping." This actually decreases wear on trees, and decreases climbing gear being left behind because there is a safe, reliable anchor to use.

Good luck, and I hope this helps!

Thanks

I don't really have any ideas.... however, would just like to make several comments, if I may....

* When I've been to Rockwood Reservations, ... would it be possible to update, or better clean/ fix up, the outdoor Public Restrooms, ... LOTS of Bugs, Mosquitos, and musty/mildew smell.....just yucky inside.

* Thank-you for making this a "Pet Free" area/environment.... it's nice, not to fear others dogs, if patrons would have them out & about,.....Also don't have to worry about the Trails, and stepping in dog droppings.

* Rockwood Reservations is a Beautiful, Tranquil, Rare type of Environment...."Love it" :) THANK-YOU

I have been visiting the park since the 70s and would like to see it opened up to technical rock climbing.
I would love to see rock climbing included in the 10 year plan. I love the outdoors and hiking. Rock climbing adds another way to enjoy being out in nature.
I understand that Rockwoods Reservation is developing a 10 year management plan and I wanted to encourage you to consider re-opening the reservation to responsible rock climbing. I encourage Rockwoods to work with the Access Fund, local climbers and climbing organizations to develop a plan that allows climbing again.
Rock climbing! I love it. I don't get to do it enough because no where in Missouri allows it. Please help me find a nearby park to enjoy my favorite sport.
I would love to see Rockwoods open back up to climbing. As it is, we have to travel to southern Illinois to climb outdoors, taking business out of the state.
I have heard there is a rock climbing area in the Rockwoods Reservation but I've never gotten an opportunity to try it. I would love to be allowed to climb there. It would be nice to be able to get some outdoor climbing in locally as opposed to going to Southern Illinois or Arkansas.
When you draft your Conservation Management Plan please be sure to include rock climbing as an appropriate recreational activity.
I am an avid climber and love all my local climbing areas. I need very little amenities and when visiting, I always try to leave an area better than when I found it.
Thank you for your consideration
Rockwoods has a long history of technical rock climbing. I spent many an enjoyable afternoon there thirty years ago. Why not open up portions of the area to climbing? It is safe, popular, and would appeal to a demographic that the Department does a poor job of reaching. Capen Park, an area owned by the University of Missouri in Columbia is a good example of a safe, open access site that is a real benefit to the community. Please e-mail me if you are interested in more information, Missouri has a quite active climbing community that could help you make this happen.
I would like to see climbing access promoted and preserved at Rockwoods. Our state is rich in beauty and offers a diversity of ways to enjoy the outdoors. The few places that our state does offer for climbing are precious to climbers who call Missouri home. Sadly, many Missourian climbers are unaware of the crags in their own state and so plan trips out-of-state. Let's treasure these opportunities here in Missouri like at Rockwoods and welcome the activity of climbing to increase the visiting and appreciation of Missouri nature. Groups such as the Access Fund nationally and climbing clubs locally are dedicated, in part, to ensure the thoughtful and responsible use of climbing areas and can offer great assistance in the care and improvement of sites like Rockwoods.

I am writing to encourage the upcoming management plan to allow rock climbing as a permitted recreational activity within the reservation and to see rock climbers recognized as a user group in the future management decisions. Please make your management decisions with careful consideration of all who may be affected by allowing or withholding a particular outdoor activity.

My idea concerns the re-opening of the bluffs in Rockwood Reservation to permit once again rock climbing, rappelling and bouldering. Rock climbing is a excellent outdoor activity that can not only bring traffic to Rockwood from experienced climbers but aid in teaching a new generation of kids the wonders of the outdoors.

I would like to see this area opened up to responsible rockclimbing use (e.g. bouldering, Sport Climbing, Trad Climbing). Climbers are generally respectful recreational users and are a growing part of the outdoor community.

See also Shawnee National Park in Southern Illinois for a comparable use area.

Thank you for your consideration

We would love to see rock climbing allowed at Rockwoods...we go to climbing gyms now to perfect our skills and safety, and it would be great to have an outdoor place near our home to climb. Illinois state parks allow rock climbing at the climbers own risk, and it works out well. All the climbers we have come across are very safety conscious, and respect the natural areas. Thank you!

I hope that Rockwood allows rock climbing access. I believe it is a wonderful to recreate in such a beautiful place.

Shure would be nice to climb some of those beautiful rocks. Theres no where else to climb around here and I really like climbing. Thanks

I would like to see equestrian use allowed on the portions of Green Rock Trail that are in both Rockwoods Reservation and Rockwoods Range. The remainder of the trail, through Greensfelder County Park, is already open to equestrian use. Parking areas would not be required in either Rockwoods as the parking at Greensfelder is ample. Some trails in Rockwoods Range are open to equestrian use, and are accessed from Greensfelder.

I would really like to see climbing allowed in the park again. I would like to see climbing allowed in other parks as well. Climbing is a great activity that encourages active lifestyles and can brings families closer together with outdoor bonding. If it is allowed and the fear of bolts risks, many parks have decided to allow climbing without bolts. That would not be my first choice, but that is a great chance to see how it works and then the decision to allow or not allow bolts could always be decided later. Thanks for your time.

Open to rock climbing.

Please consider climbing as an appropriate recreational activity for the Rockwoods Reservation. The climbing community has strong conservation and stewardship ethics and is very responsible. Local climbers and the Access Fund can be key partners in evaluation and management processes. To avoid liability concerns MDC should take no active role or responsibility for fixed anchors. The best alternative is for local climbers and climbing organizations to place and maintain fixed anchors at Rockwoods. Thank you for your consideration.

For added recreational activities, it would be wonderful to see Rockwoods Conservation Area allow rock climbing on the bluffs.

I would like to voice my desire for MDC to allow climbing as well as fixed anchor placement in the Rockwoods Reservation. The St. Louis area has a robust climbing community and a local area that provides recreational use is greatly needed. I spend a great deal of time recreating in outdoors of Missouri and Illinois, and climbers tend to be good stewards of the environment, especially when compared to many other recreational activities.

I would like the ban on rock climbing to be removed. Climbing is a significant recreational activity and has a low impact on the environment. Why should Missouri residents have to go to Illinois to rock climb?

We visit Rockwoods on about a monthly basis year round, usually to hike and picnic with kids aged anywhere from 3 - 10 in groups of 4-15. Sometimes to visit special events.

1. Have visitor center open when most visitors are using the area. We generally visit on weekends and find it closed. Maybe that's not when most visit, but would be my assumption.
2. (a) Would be agreeable to biking on some trails as long as there is a variety to choose from that remain hiking only. Often hike with several young children which would not mix well with biking from a safety standpoint. (b) Thank you for now allowing dogs while on a leash. We very much enjoy hiking with our four footed friends. (c) kids love the brochures for trail among the trees to look for natural or historic features along the trails. They even ask to bring friends along to do it with them next time.
3. Am favorable to mgmt practices such as prescribed burns and selective thinning to maintain diversity.

Dear Missouri Department of Conservation,

Thank you for requesting input on Rockwoods Reservation. I would like to see Rockwoods climbing area reopen for sport climbing. Along with MDC, I believe local climbers and the Access Fund can be key partners in the evaluation and management process.

As a climber and an organizer of a local climbing club, I want you to know the local climbing community shares your commitment to conservation and stewardship. Additionally, I support the Access Fund because they have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships. I believe Access Fund can be a great resource to MDC

Plus, the sport of rock climbing is on the rise. In the last year, St. Louis has gone from one climbing gym to three climbing gyms. While gym climbing is great, nothing can match the awesomeness of finishing your first outdoor climb. It's about time for a world-class city like St. Louis to have access to public outdoor climbing areas similar to Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and New York City (to name a few). Besides access to local outdoor climbing, what else do these three cities have in common? According to Men's Health they're in the top fittest cities list. Where's St. Louis? It's at #23 on the the fattest cities list. We can change this. I've watched my life and the lives of my friends change for the better through rock climbing.

Reopening Rockwoods Reservation to rock climbers is a good idea. The Access Fund and the rock climbing community, including the St. Louis 'MO Climbers, are here to help. Thank you for your time and kind consideration.

There are two things that I particularly enjoy about Rockwoods Reservation. First, I love that the area feels so remote, as though you are deep in the Ozarks, even though it is closely surrounded by suburbs. I would not want to see anything undermine that sense of "wilderness". Second, I love exploring the history of the place, learning and seeing how the land has been transformed over many decades by both humans and nature. Anything that would help to further highlight that rich historical context would be welcome.

I believe that the trails should remain for hikers/walkers only. The essence of Rockwoods for me has always been a kind of communion with nature.

As a child and teenager many years ago, I very much enjoyed exploring Cobb Cavern and the surrounding trails, which are now closed. I understand the dangers of that part of the area, yet it feels such a shame to leave them completely restricted. It would be wonderful if a way could be found to safely leverage the Cobb Cavern section of Rockwoods. Similarly, it would be nice if the section off of Christy Avenue with the tall bluffs was better developed. That is one of the most interesting sections of Rockwoods. Finally, I think it would be nice if a trailhead (with a couple of parking spaces) was established along Melrose Road. That would make it a little easier for hikers to explore the southern section of Rockwoods.

In closing, I want to say that Rockwoods has been the source of many fond experiences and memories for me across many years, back to when I was a child and I would walk the trails with my mother. And I continue to explore the area with my own children. I look forward to visiting Rockwoods for many more years to come.

I would love to see climbing made available at Rockwoods!

As far as the "forest management practices," that sounds like a good idea to me. But I'm no expert on the topic.

Please reopen the Rockwoods Reservation to climbers. I'm not part of the access fund, but think any access to climbing locally really helps. We are members of Upper Limit and really struggle to find great local climbing. I'm always driving hours. this would really help the community promote safe/local climbing.

Get assistance and funding from the access fund <http://www.accessfund.org/> to help establish rock climbing.

Please allow sport-style rock climbing at Rockwoods. It would be a great boon to the St. Louis, Missouri, and greater climbing communities to have a location near St. Louis. Climbers share the MDC's commitment to maintaining and preserving the outdoors and leave no trace ethics. There are many successful models of joint stewardship over climbing areas such that local groups would take responsibility for maintaining bolts, hangers, and anchors and would free the MDC from that liability. Currently, I have to drive ~2.5 hours into Illinois to climb outdoors, and would much rather stay local and not need to burn many gallons of gas so that I can climb outdoors for a weekend.

Many thanks and best regards

I'm 78 years old, which means I was probably no more than 5 or 6 when my parents took my brother and I to Rockwoods Reservation for a winter picnic. Built a fire, wrapped potatoes in mud, put in the fire and ate them when the mud was baked. Hiked and came back to camp over night as a scout, brought my six kids for snow picnics & hikes and now come with my grandchildren and to remember, but NOT ON SUNDAYS because you are closed on Sundays. Please, stay open on Sundays!

Allow rock climbing again!

I like Rockwoods Reservation the way it is. I think the trails and picnic areas are fine. Please continue to NOT allow bicycles or horses on the trails. I am very happy that you now allow dogs -- thank you!! Sadly, the only thing "wrong" with Rockwoods is the same thing that is in all parks and woods now -- the horrible Asian bush honeysuckle. So any forest management practices that will help control this is a good idea.

I like the chance to ride horses in Rockwoods Reservation. It makes a nice adjunct to riding at Greensfelder. The Rockwoods Reservation area give us a chance to ride in a serene natural setting. Too often trail managers want to exclude horses and we then have fewer and fewer places to ride. This is one of the nicer areas to ride in. Thanks.

The MDC Regulation Committee on March 8, 2012 passed a Regulation Area - specific regulation 3 CSR 10-11.120.PETS and Hunting Dogs. This amendment eliminated the prohibition of pets at Rockwood Reservation.

I request that the Regulation Prohibiting Pets be re-established because it is the right regulation for a Conservation area set aside for wild life protection by law.

This change has preventing on two occasions of my seeing deer in the Reservation, May 4th and July 27th each time the only animal observed was three hunting Dogs. I have been visiting Rockwood Reservation for the last 45 years and always able to observe deer. I was very upset seeing Dogs and no deer.

I have paid My Conservation Taxes for the past 50 years which by law was used to protect the wild life of Missouri. In understanding of law that established the purpose of The Missouri Department of Conservation does not allow any rights for domestic pets (especially Hunting Dogs).

Please place this request change in your in the 10 year Rockwood Reservation Area Management Plan.

I hope rock climbing will be allowed at Rockwoods. Currently there is no place in the St Louis area where outdoor rock climbing is allowed. St Louis now has 3 indoor climbing walls and there are lots of climbers at each gym. But to climb outdoors we have to drive to Jackson Falls III (160 miles) or to Northwest Arkansas (300 miles). Many young climbers continue to leave St Louis and move to Colorado or California because of the lack of outdoor climbing in this region.

I hike at Rockwoods about 1 or 2 times per month, all year long. Please do not allow people to bring their pets on the trails. The trails are too narrow for that, and I feel like the dogs make it more difficult to see wildlife.

I love Rockwoods Reservation. I've been going there for over 40 years. I mainly hike on the trails (although much more slowly now than when I was younger, naturally). I definitely want only foot traffic allowed on the trails, not bicycles or horses or anything. Getting out into nature and enjoying it quietly is the experience I value most. It's great to be able to do that so close to home.

I also go to special events at Rockwoods, like special celebrations and of course Maple Sugar days. It's a really good place for that kind of event. There's a lot of space for setting up different stations on the flat grassy area, so it can handle lots of exhibits and activities and lots of people.

I am sorry about the building being closed on the weekends. Even though many people just went in for the bathrooms, they were exposed to the exhibits on the way in and out, and I for one enjoyed the exhibits a lot. It was also nice to have staff to talk to for information about the site and about natural history in general.

I am concerned about plans to manage the forest. It seems to me that often the best thing to do about land is to leave it alone. If the decision should be to manage anyway, I hope wildlife will be considered, such as leaving dead trees alone, for instance, as long as they are not threatening the trails. And removing any shrubs or trees in the fall, not the spring or summer when birds are likely to be nesting in them. Things like that.

Equestrian trails please. Love Rockwoods and love to ride.... win win. Please and Thank You

Please continue open access to climbing and allow the installation and replacement of bolts/anchors. Please also discontinue permits for climbing and allow it to be open for all.

Provide connectivity to existing Hamilton-Carr Creek multi-use trail and future trail connections, i.e. north entrance.

Above all: preserve the resource.

Continue with outreach, special events, programs, etc. as you are currently doing.

Have the visitor center open on weekends and other peak use visitor periods.

Consider opening trails to mountain bike use. I know, very doubtful, that's ok just a thought for consideration.

I grew up in Missouri and love the state. In college I began rock climbing and have found it to be one of my favorite things in life. Climbers are generally a responsible clean bunch and I would like to encourage the opening of Rockwoods park for climbing. Climbers almost universally respect each other and know that nobody wants to see a bunch of garbage out in nature, the popular climbing areas I have visited have all been very clean. Climbing is a great recreational activity, it is healthy and exhilarating, Missouri needs as much climbing as it can get!

It would be great to be able to connect to Rockwood from Greensfelder through new horse trails. We have a huge number of equestrians in our area and the added trails would be much used. I'm sure we could even coordinate trail building days to help develop equestrian trails at Rockwood. Count us in for more trails and to help. Please consider this much needed amenity.

Please consider allowing trail riders to bring their horses there to ride on designated trails.

More equestrian trails. I meet up with friends and ride so since I drive over an hour to meet up with them, more trails would be welcomed!!

Would love to see a local, outdoor rock climbing area. The sport/trad climbing areas in Arkansas and Kentucky draw climbers from around the Midwest and country. At one time, Rockwoods was open to climb; it would be great to return this unique attraction for a sport that is ever growing in popularity.

Please consider a plan to allow rock climbing in Rockwoods Reservation. Rock climbing is rapidly gaining interest in the St. Louis area, with three successful rock climbing gyms currently operating in St. Louis. The community of climbers is dedicated and responsible. Outdoor climbing has thrived at Jackson Falls in the Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois. The climbing community regularly holds cleaning events to maintain forest areas which are popular for rock climbing.

I would like to see Rock Climbing to be allowed within the reservation. I have climbed at Rockwoods in the past when the Stream Organization was involved. That requirement was very restrictive and appeared to have the only purpose of discouraging rock climbing in the reservation. The rock is very good for climbing. I have been an instructor at the Upper Limits Climbing Gym for the past 12 years. No matter what activity is available there will always be some issues with individuals, but I believe that the climbing community works hard to be considerate of others and the environment. If a waiver of some sort were required to climb, this could be arraigned (although I believe that Missouri law almost negates the need for one). If it is dangerous (and even hiking can be) then you assume the risk. We, of the climbing community, currently have to drive about 2.5 hours to climb, so would be very receptive to a local area to practice our skills.

Would love to see sport climbing allowed again!

I'm interesting in have climbing at Rockwoods Reservation. Having another place to climbing in the Midwest will not only be good for the sport but will also help balance the wear and tear to existing climbing locations more locations to climb exist. Also, raising awareness to a reservation will bring more people to a location and the more eyes on a location the more opportunity for cleanup and preservation.

Make Rockwoods open to climbing.

My name is Jon Richard and I am the owner of Vertical Voyages. We are a climbing guide service that offers both Rock Climbing and Technical Tree Climbing experiences. We believe that adventure programing can be life changing, for this reason we strive to help our customers see the importance of taking healthy risk. At Vertical Voyages we also work to collaborate with the organizations we serve to develop innovative programs that connect adventure to their goals and mission as an organization.

Currently, Vertical Voyages works closely with the Missouri Botanical Gardens education division and is endorsed by the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri. Our Recreational Tree Climbing Program is also offered through Lindenwood University. We recently offered climbing at the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Runge Nature Center in Jefferson City for their 20th Anniversary Celebration event on July 13th.

A few years ago, I approached Rockwood Reservation about using the climbing site was used by the now defunct organization STREAM. I was disappointed when I was informed the the park was phasing out climbing and tabled the idea. When I discovered your announcement about developing a new management plan for the park I was encouraged. I have enjoyed Rockwood for years for both hiking and biking. It's a true gem of a park for outdoor enthusiasts. I feel that the park should reconsider allowing climbing at some level. There are many other parks in the United States that allow technical rock climbing. I would suggest that the MDC look at the policies that these parks already have in place and use them as a model for their management plan. Here are a few examples of parks where I have personally climbed that allow technical climbing, they include: Johnson Shut-ins and Capen Park (Missouri); Hanging Rock and Crowders Mountain State Parks (North Carolina); Enchanted Rock State Park (Texas), Eldorado Canyon State Park (Colorado); Ferne Clyffe State Park and Giant City State Park (Illinois); Devil's Lake State Park (Wisconsin); Taylor's Falls State Park (Minnesota) and the Adirondack State Park (New York). At the very least climbers must be made aware of the park's regulations and required to sign a liability waiver. Should it come down to solely a liability issue, the park could require that only organizations that have their own insurance would be permitted to use the climbing site. Therefor, payments would be available in the event of an accident; which by the way are very rare occurrences with organized guided programs. An excellent reference is Accidents in North American Mountaineering published by the American Alpine Club. I don't believe there were any accidents associated with an organized climbing programs in many years and certainly not in 2012.

As a guide service, I would like to offer introductory climbing programs to groups and individuals. We would provide all of the safety equipment and instruction. We could also assist in maintaining the climb site and evaluating fixed anchors should fixed anchors be used. I understand that fixed anchors were used by STREAM. I would strongly suggest continuing the use fixed anchors as they will save the cliff-line vegetation and ultimately reduce the impact on the trees and soil. We could also offer general education programs to the non-climbing public through slideshows and presentations. As mentioned earlier Vertical Voyages is always open to developing collaborative programs. Some initial suggestions would be geology and natural history lessons. Rockwood Reservation also has trees and may also want to consider recreational tree climbing in addition to rock climbing. This would tie-in nicely with your Forest Ecology curriculum.

Just a bit about my background. I am an certified American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) Single Pitch Instructor and professional member of the AMGA and currently pursuing my Advance Rock Guide certification in October. I also serve on the GOTC Council (Global Organization of Tree Climbers) and have over 12 years of experience in the climbing industry. Before launching Vertical Voyages in 2009 I taught science at Chesterfield day school for 9 years and also implemented a climbing program for the

Fulton School. My company is licensed and insured and served over 2000 climbers without incident since we opened our doors in 2009. I am also a certified trainer of the Warriors Way mental fitness program developed by the world renowned climber and author Arno Ilgner (<http://www.warriorsway.com/>). I would gladly serve as a consultant if you need a local industry professional to help advise the MDC with the development of a climbing management plan.

Rock climbers are certainly an emerging user group in Saint Louis, they are population that has grown to support three local climbing facilities; Upper Limits Downtown, Upper Limits West County and the new SoILL climbing facility in Lafayette Square. Currently, I run almost all of my rock climbing programs in Southern Illinois even though I am a Missouri based company. I would love to see more climbing options in my home state and support the local economy here in Missouri.

Feel free to contact me through my email: jon@verticalvoyages.com or by phone at 314-477-6008.

Regards,
Jon Richard
Owner
Vertical Voyages Climbing Guides

One further note. At the Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park all climbers were required to sign a waiver to climb, and the total climbers per day had a limitation. As far as I am aware, this system worked quite well. Implementing a similar procedure should work as well. I have climbed there many times. Thanks for listening.

I do support forest management practices and believe prescribed burning/cutting improves the overall health of the forest.

Please include EQUESTRIAN trails in the plan. The number of equestrian trails is limited and this would be a great complement to the Greensfelder/Rockwoods trails currently available and would serve a great number of riders. I believe organizations such as Show Me Back Country Horsemen would lend their services to defray costs of trail establishment/maintenance.

I would like to see equestrian trails in Rockwood Reservation.

open the gate at the north end during the day to make rockwoods more accessible.

It would be awesome if Rockwoods Reserve were open for climbing again!

Having an area to rock climb in the St. Louis area would be ideal. Having a variety of routes, including bolted routes, bouldering and trad routes, would provide opportunities for climbers of all skill levels. Opening the park to this kind of recreation would enhance the available climbing opportunities for St. Louis county citizens.

I am an avid rock climber. I would like to see rock climbing allowed at thos site again.

I heard there is a possibility for climbing to be available at Rockwoods. That would be SO AWESOME! My entire family (of 5) loves to climb. We live in Jefferson County and there isn't anywhere close for us to climb, so we rarely go. We would absolutely love if climbing became available at Rockwoods! We already hike there and this would give us a reason to go more often.

Rock climbing and bouldering would be fantastic.

I would like to see Rockwoods Reservation open to equestrians. I camp a lot in Greensfelder Park and would love to be able to ride from the Park through Rockwoods Reservation. Ultimately, I'd like to see improved equine camping in Rockwoods Reservation, but for now, I'd settle for being able to ride the Green Rock Trail from Greensfelder through Rockwoods Reservation.

Equestrian trails

Being an avid climber in missouri can be difficult at times due to the large distances one has to travel to have a proper outdoor climbing experience. It seems that the nearest place for good climbing is located in southern illinois 2.5 hours away from Saint Louis at Shawnee National Forest. I am a very active climber located in South County, Mo and Rockwoods Reservation is literally in my back yard. Having this destination close by in conjunction with the rising popularity of climbing will increase visitation and awareness about one of hundreds of national parks in Missouri. Maybe so much so that continued efforts to ensure safety of bolted routes and climbing over-all would soon begin to work on it's own through other organizations outside of the MDC such as Access Fund. In my experience the culture of climbers that exist here in Saint Louis is one that is trustworthy and loyal to preserving the quality of their environment in a manner that is unrivaled by the average visitor. I and many others understand how finite a sport like climbing is and would aid MDC in their efforts to preserve Rockwoods as well as all aspects of the environment

There is currently no convenient climbing close to Saint Louis, and with the surge in popularity of Sport Climbing, I think it would bring a large crowd to Rockwoods Reservation and inspire or re-kindle a love of nature that everybody should have.

I know that bolts aren't natural, but Rock-climbing has brought me back to my childhood hobbies of hiking, climbing, joking around a campfire, and enjoying nature. More so, the majority of climbers I have met outdoors have been honest, respectful, and caring of the environment and the people around them. Whether it's sharing information about where to find a certain wall, or talking with hikers and people on horses that are on their way through, their openness and class have inspired me to be the same. Opening up sport climbing at Redwoods Reservation in conjunction with the popularity of Rock climbing would in my opinion, inspire even more people to get out and enjoy nature. You don't need mountains, the Ozarks, or a long-drive to enjoy beautiful scenery, tough trails, and a good work-out. I think that opening climbing would be good for the Saint Louis community and more importantly, the state of Missouri.

To develop a cooperative effort between the Department of Conservation and the Division of Youth Services to allow the Division of Youth Services to Rock climb and rappell at Rockwood Reservation. In return the Division of Youth Services could assist in various projects on the area. A few ideas would be trail maintenance, area clean up or other projects where assistance is needed.

As an Outdoor Rehabilitation Counselor in Adventure Based Counseling we use rock climbing to teach the parallel process of life experiences to allow the youth to gain knowledge of their thinking process and life changing attitudes.

By allowing the Division of Youth Services to utilize Rockwood Reservation for rock climbing we would be able to serve approximately 240 youth in a more consistant treatment modality due to the location of the sight.

We receive our clients from the Juvenile Court Systems in St. Louis, St. Charles and Jefferson Counties for this region. We do not get to choose our clients we must develop a treatment program for each individual client to meet the needs of the client. Rock climbing at Rockwood Reservation would assist in this endeavor. Since we are a State Agency and the youth are legally in our custody we would have complete and total liability for the youth.

The training requirements to become a facilitator for rock climbing have been developed over the years and a skills check sheet has been implemented to assure that all staff that become certified to facilitate have the skills necessary to keep the entire group and sight safe. This training consist of three phases, first the person must be a participant in the activity, then through specific training, co-facilitate the activity with a certified instructor, third to facilitate on there own the activity with the supervision of a certified instructor. If there are concerns of the training, I would be happy to provide more detailed information on the training process.

As Midwesterners, we live in an area relatively devoid of recreational resources compared to the west of even the east coast. Please open this area to climbing with as much access as possible. This will increase recreational opportunities for everyone living in the greater St. Louis area. Thank you.

Mission: "providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources." Thank you for such a wonderful resource and for all you do across the state. I am writing to request that some trails in rockwood be opened for equestrian use. As a multi-use area, equestrians would like to be included. I ride often at Greensfelder and Rockwood Range and have taken the Green Rock trail as far as horses are allowed. How fantastic it would be to be able to ride that trail into Rockwoods Reservation! As citizens, we all support MDC through our taxes and I think riders would even been interested in paying a yearly fee for a "bridle tag" to help support the park. I'm begging you to please include equestrians in your plan.

Growing up in West St. Louis county, I spent many days recreating at Rockwoods Reservation. It wasn't until recently, however, that I discovered the Reservation was formerly home to the only sport climbing and bouldering routes for rock climbers within a reasonable distance for St. Louisans. We are home to a large community of climbers who, among other things, support 5 indoor climbing gyms. Currently for one to enjoy climbing outdoors, we must make a 3 hour drive to Southern Illinois, or even 6 hours to Arkansas. We would love to have a place to climb right here in our home town, and to help make it a destination for climbers from other parts of the region as well. Climbers are responsible stewards of our climbing areas and resources, with a proven history of working with area departments to locate, place, and maintain fixed anchors and other climbing hardware. It is ubiquitous in even the largest and most sought-after climbing areas in the world for the local Department of Conservation to assume no liability for climbers and no responsibility for the maintenance of equipment. Organizations like the Access Fund and the Missouri Climbers Coalition can be burdened to place and maintain anchors if access is granted in the park. There would also be minimal, if any, infrastructure required to open the area to climbing, and extremely little to zero impact on the natural areas. If there is a need for signage for way-finding or warnings, I would be more than happy to raise funding to cover the costs. Please let me know if you require any further evidence of the benefits of allowing climbers access to this local resource.

Best Regards

It would be very exciting if rock climbing were allowed in the Rockwood Reservation. I have visited the park many times for hiking and trail running, but would really appreciate if roped climbing were allowed. I had always heard that climbing was allowed with a permit, but never could figure out the process. I would also be interested in opportunities for off road cycling in the area. I have road biked the many incredible hills in the park, but think there is a lot of opportunity for mountain biking trails. Thanks for the consideration.

Many years ago, late 60's, I was able to ride my horse from Greensfelder park to Rockwood Reservation and back. The trails were easy and the scenery was very interesting. Four decades later, I am now at a age where hiking is not an option because of physical problems. But riding my horse is. I have not seen this park since you cut off the trails leading into it. My husband and I generally ride together and we would enjoy being able to ride over to Rockwood and see all you have to offer. Our horses are well trained to handle the presence of hikers, bicycles, dogs, baby carriages, ATVs and wildlife. They have been ridden extensively in the Rockies, Ozarks, and Black Hills of the Dakotas. For procedure information you may want to talk to St. Charles County. They recently opened parks with multiuse trails, including horses. They did a great job with development and management. While I suspect you are inclined to reject this request without any further consideration, please at least talk to the parks department of St. Charles County. They are close and easily accessed. Thank you for your time.

Free and open climbing access to Rockwoods should return. Since the early last century climbers had enjoyed unrestricted access. Tom Horbein, STL native, climbed at Rockwoods extensively before doing the second ascent of Mt. Everest . He established a first ascent up the steeper more technical west ridge. I often climbed at Rockwoods in the 1970's and 80's. Somewhere in the early 1990's however, policy changed and climbing access was denied. All my concerns fell on deaf ears at the time. Thank you for revisiting this unnecessary ban on climbing.

Over the last twenty years STL has spawned a climbing industry. 3 full time climbing gyms plus hundreds of climbing walls at various facilities and schools now exist in the city. I personally built walls for The College School of Webster Groves, Lindenwood College and Parkway High School. People participating in climbing weekly in STL number easily 30 to 50 thousand. It's no longer the Hemmingway version of climbing. It's climbing that whole family enjoys. It's treated as great exercise that builds self confidence of all beginners of any age. Climbing is allowed at Missouri State parks now and all of it's national forests.

The anchors that do exist at Rockwoods may need replacing or repairs. If unrestricted access is provided to us, all anchors would be modernized by the Missouri Climbers Coalition at our expense. We do this all the time. I have been doing anchor work for 36 years. Our quality of work is grade A.

Just please open it back up to climbing. Climbers are by nature, " Trash picker uppers."

Please Please Please, We need more equestrian trails. More and more people are owning horses and riding. We are getting more young people involved with horses which helps keep the kids off the streets and out of trouble. I am disabled and can not ride a bike or walk any distance, but put me on a horse and I can do outside activities also. Horse back riding is also great exercise for you to lose weight and build muscle while you have fun and enjoy nature. So much better than being stuck in a gym.

I would like to encourage you to reopen Rockwoods to rock climbing. I represent the Iowa Climbers Coalition, a group that promotes rock climbing access in Iowa and the Midwest. Our members frequently travel throughout the Midwest and the US to experience rock climbing in new locations. I know our members would be excited to learn the Rockwoods was reopened to climbing and would travel to Rockwoods once it was reopened. I personally take several rock climbing trips per year to locations in Missouri, Arkansas, Colorado and Kentucky. I would be excited to have a new location in the Midwest where I could climb and would definitely make the trip down to climb.

Hi -

I am an active conservationist and avid rock climber from Iowa City, Iowa. I would like to strongly encourage the MDC to work with local climbing organizations, as well as national organizations like Access Fund, to re-open Rockwoods to climbers.

By partnering with Access Fund and other groups, the MDC can take advantage of their experience in opening and re-opening areas, and the steps necessary to be taken in order to ensure the safety and improve the experience of the park.

Climbing is one of the closer activities to nature a person can get, and it is my belief that sport climbing should be a welcomed addition to any natural management area.

In Iowa, we have implemented a very responsible approach to developing our climbing parks, and both the climbing community and other naturist communities have appreciated what we've done. I encourage you to look to your neighbors or consult the Access Fund with any concerns you might have.

Climbing is as safe an activity as anything else when done in a well maintained park, and should be a part of any outdoor program.

Opening the climbing here would be great for local St. Louis climbers to get in some practice placing gear and anchor set ups. It would be nice to have a local crag near STL.

Please include equestrian trails. MOST equestrians are very conservation minded and appreciative of the trails we have as we are always in danger of losing them.

I would like to see more trails that horses can use

I would love to be able to ride my horse in Rockwoods Reservation. I am a senior citizen. I love to experience nature but I am unable physically to hike. My horse enables

me to enjoy the outdoors. Rockwoods is close to my home and would give me the opportunity to ride without hauling a long distance. Gas is expensive!!!

I would like to see rock and ice climbing allowed in the park.

The Green Rock Trail could be better if there was a loop option. That way someone would not need to have a car at both ends and yet could explore that part of the area. Also consider adding other trails and/or links between the current trails.

I would love to see Rockwoods Reservation open to horseback riding. I frequent the other conservations areas in the surrounding and really enjoy having a nice place to ride my horse and be close to home.

I believe that you should open climbing in this area. I think it would bring a valuable activity to the community.

Allowing rock climbing at Rockwoods will introduce more people to the Department of Conservation and their mission. Many rock climbers are already passionate about conservation.

Anchors have improved since the existing anchors were placed at Rockwoods. The Missouri Climber's Coalition is willing to upgrade and maintain the anchors to the current standards.

Climbing at Rockwoods should be open to all rock climbers. While previously the Department required certification by an outside organization, this approach is not practical for the Department or rock climbers. We want to work with the Department to develop an approach that will address their concerns while allowing rock climbers easy access to the rock.

I would love to see Rockwoods Reservation open to rock climbing. I take my daughter, nieces, and nephew's rock climbing in other locations. I am teaching them to rock climb because it allows them to be physically active, teaches them about safety, and it develops a love for being outside. It would be great to have another location in Missouri to take them.

Thank you

Rockwoods Reservation in western St. Louis County harbors a rich diversity of plant and animal life as well as springs, caves, and rock formations. These rock formations offer some of the closest access to rock climbing outdoor for St. Louis citizens. Rockwoods is historically significant to Missouri's rock climbers. People have climbed there since at least the 1940's. With the closure of Rockwoods Reservation to climbing, the site has been negatively affected. Without climbing access, this area has received fewer visitors. The St. Louis area alone boasts around 10,000 climbers. Climbers are extremely active and passionate about protecting their climbing areas, and more and more governments keep taking them away. These same climbers hold fundraisers that raise thousands of dollars in support of their beloved climbing destinations. When work needs done such as trail maintenance or interpretive signage, climbers are some of the first people on the scene ready to help out.

The denial of access to Rockwoods Reservation has not only hurt the Rockwoods, but other areas with climbing access. There has been an increase in climber attendance at other destinations. This increase from displaced climbers is causing crowding at the other areas. Problems such as these are the cause for a much needed increase in management. The local economy surrounding the Rockwoods Reservation suffer as a result. Since limiting climbing access, income has been limited that can be received by the store owners, and the communities themselves suffer by decreased tax revenue, that is no longer generated.

If the Rockwoods Reservation does not allow access for climbers at their site, a this effect will continue take place, and almost every aspect of the reservation and surrounding reservations/communities will have a prolonged effected. Rockwoods Reservation is a valuable resource, and rock climbing should be an accepted form of recreation.

I strongly support the Missouri climbers Coalition in their effort to reopen Rockwoods Reservation to climbing. Climbing is a popular activity practiced by men and women from all walks of life, and is equally legitimate and no more impactful than any other number of activities that are currently allowed within the reservation.

I'm a climber who lives in the St. Louis area, and believe that allowing climbing at Rockwoods would not only introduce more St. Louis area people to the Rockwood conservation area and its mission, but also provide selective use of the crag areas for these climbers at a minimal impact. The self-regulating group of climbers is not only safety minded (for their own benefit and those of others), but also environmentally involved, which in the long run will engage a new set of people in Rockwoods and also provide a nearby outdoor climbing area for our residents use, while minimizing the use of available staffing in the park.

I would like the park to be more pet friendly. I want to walk my dog with me.

I like the sugar maple festival.

Although I live on the IL side now, I have grown up in StL and have visited Rockwoods Reservation many times over the last 2 decades. I would like to see the park opened up to both rock climbing and mountain biking. The current trails limit the types of recreation available in the park and I support opening this up to a broader range of outdoor users.

In addition, using forest management techniques to ensure a healthier forest, just makes sense for the area and the ecosystem.

In addition, as I am an out-of-state user, I would also support a small daily use fee or a suggested donation box at trailheads or parking lots.

Thank you,

Open rock climbing to public, a valuable asset to the area. Thanks for your consideration.

Allowing rock climbing at Rockwoods will introduce more people to the Department of Conservation and their mission. Many rock climbers are already passionate about conservation.

Dear Missouri Department of Conservation,

Thank you for requesting input on Rockwoods Reservation. I would like to see Rockwoods climbing area reopen for sport climbing. Along with MDC, I believe local climbers and the Access Fund can be key partners in the evaluation and management process.

As a climber and an organizer of a local climbing club, I want you to know the local climbing community shares your commitment to conservation and stewardship. Additionally, I support the Access Fund because they have a long track record of resource protection and management partnerships. I believe Access Fund can be a great resource to MDC.

Plus, the sport of rock climbing is on the rise. In the last year, St. Louis has gone from one climbing gym to three climbing gyms. While gym climbing is great, nothing can match the awesomeness of finishing your first outdoor climb. It's about time for a world-class city like St. Louis to have access to public outdoor climbing areas similar to Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and New York City (to name a few). Besides access to local outdoor climbing, what else do these three cities have in common? According to Men's Health they're in the top fittest cities list. Where's St. Louis? It's at #23 on the the fattest cities list. We can change this. I've watched my life and the lives of my friends change for the better through rock climbing.

Reopening Rockwoods Reservation to rock climbers is a good idea. The Access Fund and the rock climbing community, including the St. Louis 'MO Climbers, are here to help. Thank you for your time and kind consideration.

Please consider horsebackriding in your plan. Rockwoods Reservation already has hiking/biking trails. Please allow horses on some trails as well. Many horseback riders are senior citizens, who may be unable to hike the trails. But could enjoy their beauty from the back of a horse. We all contribute to the sales tax percentage that helps your revenue. So including horseback riding would avail more of the population use of your beautiful area.

I understand that climbing routes have been developed on Rockwoods reservation and that it is no longer possible to get a permit to climb on this land. I am writing this in the hope that the land will once again be available to climbers, because I believe the climbing community in St. Louis will be helpful in conservation awareness as well as local outdoor climbing will be important for the growth of the climbing community in St. Louis.

I would like to support climbing in MDC areas and Rockwoods Preservation in particular. I understand the need for multi-use areas; after all I am a rock climber, birder, fly fisher, backpacker, and member of Missouri Native Plant Society. I often enjoy several of these activities in the same trip. Development and utilization of rock climbing areas can be done in a sensitive manner allowing greater use and enjoyment. Working with the Access Fund is a great way of ensuring responsible climbing development.

Development of a connection trail between STLCC - Wildwood campus and Rockwoods Reservation. We share a boarder where the trails on each property are a few hundred yards from each other. I would like to suggest we explore the possibility of a connection trail that would allow foot traffic from Wildwood Town Center access through the campus to Rockwoods Reservation.

August 8, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

The Illinois Climbers Association (ICA) strongly supports revision of the Rockwoods Reservation Management Plan to include rock climbing as a recognized and appropriate use of the area. The ICA further proposes rock climbing be opened to everyone, eliminating the need for a special use permit.

The ICA is a group of rock climbers with over 140 members mainly from Illinois and Missouri, but also some members from neighboring states including Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The ICA has a network of active supporters and volunteers, many of whom are citizens of Missouri. In fact two of our current board members, Dave Chancellor and Jim Thurmond, are residents of Missouri. Our volunteers consistently work with land management agencies to put on trail maintenance days at climbing areas such as Jackson Falls, which is managed by the US Forrest Service as part of The Shawnee National Forrest in Illinois. Our organization is proud of the positive working relationship we have with public land managers in Illinois and we hope to build a similar positive relationship with the MDC.

Rockwoods Reservation provides a unique and valuable resource for Missouri climbers. An important purpose of the MDC is "to facilitate and provide opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources." Opening Rockwoods for climbing aligns with this goal, as it would result in a broader use of the area and greater public understanding of the natural resources it has to offer.

Rockwoods has a rich climbing history, attracting climbers to its cliffs since as early as the 1940s. Many well-known climbers honed their skills at the Rockwoods bluffs, such as Tom Hornbein, a groundbreaking mountaineer from St. Louis who achieved the first ascent of the West Ridge of Mount Everest in 1963.

Throughout the country, rock climbing is recognized as a legitimate and longstanding use of public lands. The National Park System considers climbing a "welcomed and historical use" of the land it manages. Climbing is also a welcomed and historical use on other agency lands including hundreds of sites managed by the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Army Corp of Engineers. Furthermore, rock climbing can be a catalyst for tourism that can have a significant impact on the local economies near popular destinations. Therefore we respectfully suggest that the MDC develop a management plan for Rockwoods that also recognizes rock climbing as a legitimate and welcomed use of the area.

The ICA proposes Rockwoods also be opened to climbing and that all climbers have the ability to use the area. In the past, climbing was regulated by a third party organization that granted permits. This approach is not practical for the MDC or climbers as a user group. Through coordination with the climbing community and proper planning, open access will be consistent with MDC's conservation goals. We support a management plan that both addresses conservation concerns and allows access for all climbers. Rock climbers generally, and the ICA in particular, have a strong conservation and stewardship ethic. The heart of rock climbing is an experience, not just a sport, and enjoyment of nature plays significant role in that experience.

We urge the MDC consider opening Rockwoods Reservation for climbing in the drafting of the area's management plan. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and to address any potential concerns regarding this proposal. For more information please contact Leif Faber, the ICA

president, by phone at 217-621-3429 or by email at bwfaber@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,
Illinois Climbers Association
Board of Directors:
Leif Faber, Eric Ulner, Dave Downey, John Payne, David Chancellor, Phillip Carrier, Matt Bliss, Jim Thurmond, David Hug

Please continue climbing access in this area, I've never been and would love to climb in this area someday being that it is near my home. Climbers are a great motivated group of people to have in any wilderness area, the majority of them love their climbing areas more than any other nature lovers. With the right education and approach to letting people climb in an area it can be very sustainable and even improve the protection of a designated wilderness area.

Dear Department of Conservation, I would like to ask that people not be allowed to bring dogs on the trails at Rockwood. There is no place to pass on the trails, and I feel like it diminishes the wildlife I am able to see. Thank you for your help. I would also appreciate having the centers opened on Sunday, especially at Powder Valley.

Appendix 6. Comments from respondents requesting we use comments submitted prior to the Summer 2013 Idea Gathering Phase.

To: Gus Raeker
Forestry District Supervisor
Rockwoods Reservation
2751 Glencoe Rd
Wildwood MO 63038

RE: Keeping the Rockwoods Reservation Climbing site open.

For many years both the Picnic site 1 and the Christy bluff site have been used as one of the few places near St. Louis where people or groups were allowed to Rock Climb and Rappell.

With the demise of S.T.R.E.A.M. in early 2000, the certifying agency responsible for training people to use the site safely disappeared. Since that time there have been no trainings and the use has plummeted to next to nothing.

YMCA TEAM Works, a part of the YMCA of the Ozarks Trout Lodge and Camp Lakewood; which is part of the YMCA of Greater St. Louis, has safely used the site at least once a year since that time. This has been possible because I (Larry Jeude) was certified during the S.T.R.E.A.M. years and as an employee of S.T.R.E.A.M. during that time was responsible for running certification programs at Rockwoods.

When I tried to reserve the site this year in June for an early August date it took almost 6 weeks to get permission for the special use permit. When Gus Reaker finally granted permission to use the site he also indicated this would likely be the last time because the site was to permanently shut down. I asked what could be done to keep the site open and his response was to write a letter stating a preference that site remain open.

Gus outlined some of MDC concerns and issues about keeping the site open. They were:

1. Even though Climbing and Rappelling is banned at other MDC sites Rockwoods was "Grandfathered in" due to its history.
2. Ensuring a safe opportunity
3. Liability concerns,
4. Needing qualified instructors/leaders for climbing activities

I would like to address these issues and make some proposals that might help to mitigate them.

I will take # 3. Firs::

The YMCA trains instructors on the Alpine Tower and Teams Challenge course at Greensfelder County Park. The County Parks has the same liability concerns as the MDC. This has been overcome by requiring each group, or person, that uses the site to have a \$2.5 million insurance indemnification liability waiver naming the St. Louis County Parks as additionally insured for use of either facility.

When the Alpine Tower was constructed in the early 90's S.T.R.E.A.M. was the training agency

responsible for the Tower. When S.T.R.E.A.M. folded in 2000, the YMCA TEAM Works program took over many of S.T.R.E.A.M.'s functions, this included the Alpine Tower training, and the training has resided here ever since. At that time the climbing sites at Rockwoods were shut down so there was no transfer of the training function to TEAM Works for this site. With the demise of S.T.R.E.A.M an oversight body for the Alpine Tower and Teams Challenge course was established called the Trainers Council. The Trainers Council still exists and oversees these venues.

The Alpine Tower essentially uses the same equipment and techniques as a Rock Climbing and Rappelling site. Participants use Rock Climbing harness and helmets to attach to a belay system so they can safely climb the tower and then they are lowered to the ground on the same belay system. Most of the safety procedures are identical to what would be used at a Rock Climbing site. The belay systems use the same ropes and hardware, and are set up the same way. The knots and rescue procedures are very similar to that used in Rock Climbing and Rappelling.

#2 & 4,

The YMCA TEAM Works program has the ability, history, continuity with the site, and expertise to set up a training system that could insure the safe operation of the Rock Climbing and Rappelling sites at Rockwoods Reservation. The system would be based on the old S.T.R.E.A.M. training curriculum and updated to incorporate any new "best practices" established by organizations such as: the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT), the American Camping Association (ACA), and the Professional Ropes Course Association. (PRCA).

If these proposals can help start a conversation on how to keep the Rockwoods climbing site open please let me know.

Thank You

Larry Jeude
Director of TEAM Works St. Louis
1528 Locust St.
St. Louis MO 63103
314-436-1177 Ext 319
ljeude@ymcastlouis.org



September 9, 2011

Gus Raeker
Forestry District Supervisor
Rockwoods Reservation
2751 Glencoe Rd.
Wildwood, MO 63038
636.458.8836 Ext. 227
gus.raeker@mdc.mo.gov

RE: Rock Climbing at Rockwoods Reservation

Dear Mr. Raeker:

Kevin McCarthy, a Missouri Department of Conservation employee, recently contacted the Access Fund concerned that rock climbing may no longer be allowed at Rockwoods Reservation. Kevin's feeling is that liability concerns and permit administration issues are the primary problems with allowing climbing to continue at Rockwoods. As explained in more detail below, the Access Fund is the only national non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting climbing access through conservation, education, funding, and effective resource management planning.

The Access Fund

The Access Fund represents over 2.3 million climbers with five core programs performed on the national and local levels: Climbing Management Policy; Stewardship and Conservation; Local Support and Mobilization; Land Acquisition/Protection; and Education. We currently hold memorandums of understanding concerning climbing management/resource conservation with the National Park Service,¹ the Bureau of Land Management,² and the United States Forest Service.³

The Access Fund compiles and publishes the largest list of wildlife related closures in the country. We work with federal, state, and private land managers to develop and implement climbing management plans that are currently in use across the country,⁴ and have hosted several national climbing management conferences attended by hundreds of land managers from across the country.⁵ In many instances, climbers actively assist⁶ land managers by maintaining trails, removing trash,⁷ and help locate, monitor, and report on species of concern.⁸

For twenty years the Access Fund has worked with federal, state, and private entities across the country to promote climbing access while protecting and preserving sensitive resources for future generations. The Access Fund understands the challenges involved with

developing a climbing management plan. Accordingly, we publish a 78 page manual titled *Climbing Management: A Guide to Climbing Issues and the Development of a Climbing Management Plan*.⁹ The Access Fund has the interest, experience, and resources necessary to help develop an effective climbing management plan for Rockwoods Reservation. To learn more about the Access Fund, see www.accessfund.org.

Climbing Management for Rockwoods Reservation

Given the growing popularity of climbing in general, now is the time for Rockwoods to develop a climbing management plan. The Access Fund is in a position to assist in a variety of ways:

- Provide detailed site specific climbing management recommendations in consultation with local climbers;
- Provide grants/funds for qualified projects related to climbing access and conservation;
- Organize volunteers and stewardship projects via an Adopt-A-Crag event; and
- Connect resource managers with the most active climbers for advice on critical management needs.

In our experience a successful climbing management plan does the following:

- Complies with statutory and internal agency guidelines.
- Articulates climbing as a recreational experience, and describes the variety of climbing opportunities and values.
- Identifies management alternatives that address climbing impacts in a manner that is consistent with best management practices used elsewhere.
- Builds cooperative relationships between climbers and resource managers.
- Provides management direction necessary to protect resources and provide climbing opportunities.
- Provides information about status and contextual importance of resources values (including climbing activity), and provides information about use patterns and effects of climbing on identified resource values.
- Implements any necessary restrictions incrementally from indirect measures (outreach and education) to direct measures (specific access trail and climbing route closures).

* * *

The Access Fund can assist in a variety of ways including developing and implementing a comprehensive climbing management plan for Rockwoods Reservation that eliminates the liability concerns and minimizes the associated administrative costs/burdens. We can also provide funding for specific climbing related projects and a volunteer base to do stewardship and conservation work. Further, Rockwoods' climbing management plan could be used as a model for other Missouri Department of Conservation lands that possess climbing resources.

Thank you for your consideration of climbing management at Rockwoods Reservation. The Access Fund looks forward to participating throughout the entire planning process. Please keep us informed as the planning process proceeds. Feel free to contact me via telephone (303-545-6772 x113) or email (rd@accessfund.org) to discuss this matter further.

Best Regards,



R.D. Pascoe
Policy Analyst
The Access Fund

Cc: Brady Robinson, Access Fund, Executive Director
Zachary Lesch-Huie, Access Fund, Affiliate Director
Kevin McCarthy

¹ See <http://www.accessfund.org/atf/cf/%7B1F5726D5-6646-4050-AA6E-C275DF6CA8E3%7D/AF%20NPS%20MOU.pdf>

² See <http://www.accessfund.org/atf/cf/%7B1F5726D5-6646-4050-AA6E-C275DF6CA8E3%7D/AF%20BLM%20MOU.pdf>

³ See <http://www.accessfund.org/atf/cf/%7B1F5726D5-6646-4050-AA6E-C275DF6CA8E3%7D/2009%20USFS%20MOU.pdf>

⁴ See generally <http://www.climbingmanagement.org>

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ The Access Fund sponsors approximately 130 Adopt a Crag events annually across the country. Adopt a Crag—the Access Fund’s signature stewardship program—exists to unite local climbing communities in partnership with land managers to conserve local climbing areas. Adopt-a-Crag events typically include activities such as litter clean-ups, trail construction and restoration, erosion control, and invasive weed removal. See <http://www.accessfund.org/site/c.tmL5KhNWLRH/b.5000889/k.166C/AdoptaCrag.htm>

⁷ In July 2011, the Access Fund launched a new Conservation Team that will spend ten months a year travelling the country addressing conservation issues.

⁸ Examples include: Luther Rock, Lake Tahoe, CA; Pinnacles National Monument, CA; Eldorado Canyon State Park, CO; Jefferson County Open Space, CO; Acker Rock, OR.

⁹ See <http://www.accessfund.org/atf/cf/%7B1F5726D5-6646-4050-AA6E-C275DF6CA8E3%7D/CM-web.pdf>